UNITED
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Economic and Social Council

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E/AC.51/1996/L.5
24 June 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE FOR PROGRAMME AND COORDINATION
Thirty-sixth session
3-28 June 1996 (Part I)

Draft report

Rapporteur: Mr. Volodymyr Y. YELCHENKO (Ukraine)

I. ORGANIZATION OF THE SESSION

1. The Committee for Programme and Coordination held an organizational meeting (1st meeting) at United Nations Headquarters on 3 May 1996 and the first part of its thirty-sixth session at United Nations Headquarters from 3 June to 28 June 1996. It held ... meetings (2nd to meetings) and a number of informal consultations.

A. Agenda

2. The agenda for the thirty-sixth session, adopted by the Committee at its 1st meeting, is reproduced in annex I.

3. In adopting the agenda, the Committee, in accordance with the decision taken at its organizational meeting for 1996, decided to consider at its thirty-sixth session, the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Accountability, management improvement and oversight in the United Nations system (Parts one and two)" (A/50/503 and Add.1). The Committee also decided that the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Evaluation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s: Towards a more operational approach?" (A/50/885) as well as the comments of the Secretary-General and of the Administrative Committee on Coordination thereon (A/50/885/Add.1) should be considered in conjunction with agenda item 5 (b), entitled "Implementation of the System-wide Plan of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development".

4. In the absence of the report of the Secretary-General on the administrative, structural and other aspects of the improvement of the efficiency of the Organization, as mandated in General Assembly resolution

45/254 A or 21 December 1990, the Committee decided to defer to its thirty-seventh session the consideration of the question of review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations.

5. At its 2nd meeting, on 3 June 1996, the Committee decided not to consider the question of preparations for the Joint Meetings of the Committee for Programme and Coordination and the Administrative Committee on Coordination, as the functions of the present joint meetings of the two Committees are henceforth assigned to the Economic and Social Council, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 50/227 of 24 May 1996.

B. Election of officers

6. At its 1st, 2nd and 3rd meetings, on 3 May and 3 and 4 June 1996, the Committee elected the following officers by acclamation:

Chairman: Mr. Jorge Osella (Argentina)

Vice Chairmen: Mr. Sam Hanson (Canada)
Mr. Désiré Nkounkou (Congo)
Mr. Shoji Ogawa (Japan)

Rapporteur: Mr. Volodymyr Yelchenko (Ukraine)

C. Attendance

7. The following States members of the Committee were represented:

Argentina
Bahamas
Belarus
Benin
Brazil
Cameroon
Canada
China
Comoros
Congo
Cuba
Egypt
France
Germany
Ghana
India
Indonesia
Iran (Islamic Republic of)
Japan
Mexico
Netherlands
Norway
Pakistan
Republic of Korea
Romania
Russian Federation
Senegal
Togo
Trinidad and Tobago
Ukraine
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
United States of America
Uruguay
Zaire

8. The following States Members of the United Nations were represented by observers:

Algeria	Malaysia
Armenia	Mongolia
Australia	Morocco
Austria	New Zealand
Belgium	Nicaragua
Bolivia	Panama
Bulgaria	Paraguay
Chile	Philippines
Colombia	Portugal
Costa Rica	South Africa
Ecuador	Sweden
Ireland	Thailand
Italy	Tunisia
Kazakstan	Turkey
Kenya	Uganda
Latvia	Zimbabwe

9. The following specialized agencies and regional commissions were represented:

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Economic Commission for Africa

Economic Commission for Europe

Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia.

10. The following non-member State was represented by an observer: Palestine.

11. Also present at the session were senior officials of the United Nations Secretariat. At the invitation of the Committee, Mr. Othman, Vice-Chairman of the Joint Inspection Unit, and Mr. F. Mezzalama, Inspector, participated in the work of the Committee.

D. Documentation

12. The list of documents before the Committee at its thirty-sixth session is set forth in annex II.

E. Adoption of the report of the Committee

13. At its .... and .... meetings, on 28 June 1996, the Committee adopted the draft report on the first part of its thirty-sixth session (E/AC.51/1996/L.5 and Add.1-35).

ANNEX I

Agenda for the thirty-sixth session of the Committee

1. Election of officers.

2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.

3. Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations.

4. Programme questions:

   (a) Programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 1994-1995;

   (b) Proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001;

   (c) Outline of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999;

   (d) Evaluation.

5. Coordination questions:

   (a) Report of the Administrative Committee on Coordination and preparations for the Joint Meetings of the Committee for Programme and Coordination and the Administrative Committee on Coordination;

   (b) Implementation of the System-wide Plan of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development;

   (c) Proposed system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women 1996-2001.

6. Reports of the Joint Inspection Unit.

7. Provisional agenda for the thirty-seventh session of the Committee.

8. Adoption of the report of the Committee on its thirty-sixth session.

ANNEX II

List of the documents before the Committee at part I of its thirty-sixth session

(3-28 June 1996)

E/AC.51/1996/1 and Add.1	Annotated provisional agenda
A/51/128 and Add.1	Report of the Secretary-General on programme performance of the United Nations for 1994-1995
A/51/6	Proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001
	Perspective
	Programme 1: Political Affairs
	Programme 2: Peace-keeping operations
	Programme 3: Outer space affairs
	Programme 4: Legal affairs
	Programme 5: Policy coordination and sustainable development
	Programme 6: Africa: New Agenda for Development
	Programme 7: Economic and social information and policy analysis
	Programme 8: Development support and management services
	Programme 9: Trade and development
	Programme 10: Environment
	Programme 11: Human Settlements
	Programme 12: Crime prevention and criminal justice
	Programme 13: International drug control
	Programme 14: Economic and social development in Africa

	Programme 15: Economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific
	Programme 16: Economic Development in Europe
	Programme 17: Economic and social development in Latin America and the Caribbean
	Programme 18: Economic and social development in Western Asia
	Programme 19: Human rights
	Programme 20: Humanitarian assistance
	Programme 21: Protection and assistance to refugees
	Programme 22: Palestinian refugees
	Programme 23: Public Information
	Programme 24: Administrative services
	Programme 25: Internal oversight
A/51/88	Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on strengthening the role of evaluation findings in programme design, delivery and policy directives
E/AC.51/1996/2	Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the in-depth evaluation of the Department of Public Information
E/AC.51/1996/3	Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the in-depth evaluation of the programme of peace-keeping operations: termination phase
E/AC.51/1996/4	Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the triennial review of the implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee on Programme and Coordination at its thirty-second session on the evaluation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
E/1996/18 and Add.1	Annual overview report of the Administrative Committee on Coordination for 1995

E/1996/4 and Corr.1	Report of the twenty-ninth series of joint meetings of the Committee for Programme and Coordination and the Administrative Committee on Coordination
E/AC.51/1996/6 and Corr.1	Progress report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the System-wide Plan of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development
A/50/885 and Add.1	Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Evaluation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s: Towards a more operational approach?" and comments of the Secretary-General and of the Administrative Committee on Coordination thereon
E/1996/16	Report of the Secretary-General on the proposed system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 1996-2001
E/AC.51/1996/5	Letter dated 22 April 1996 from the Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women to the Chairperson of the Committee for Programme and Coordination on the proposed system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 1996-2001
A/50/503 and Add.1 and Add.2	Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Accountability, management improvement and oversight in the United Nations system (Parts one and two) and the comments of the Secretary-General thereon
E/AC.51/1996/L.6	Draft provisional agenda for the thirty-seventh session of the Committee for Programme and Coordination: note by the Secretariat
E/AC.51/1996/L.1 and Rev.1	Note by the Secretariat on the status of documentation
E/AC.51/1996/L.2 and Rev.1	Proposed programme of work
E/AC.51/1996/L.3	List of reports issued by the Joint Inspection Unit in 1995 and early 1996: note by the Secretariat
E/AC.51/1996/L.4	Current notional costs of documentation and meeting time: note by the Secretariat

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Thirty-sixth session
3-28 June 1996 (Part I)

DRAFT REPORT

Addendum

Rapporteur: Mr. Volodymyr Y. YELCHENKO (Ukraine)

PROGRAMME QUESTIONS: PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS FOR THE BIENNIUM 1994-1995

1. At its 4th, 5th and 6th meetings, on 4 and 5 June 1996, the Committee considered the report of the Secretary-General on the programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 1994-1995 (A/51/128 and Add.1). Many delegations emphasized the importance and role of the Committee's functions in programmatic and coordination matters and in this regard fully supported its work.

Conclusions and recommendations

2. The Committee commended the quality of the report and expressed appreciation for its clarity and format of presentation. It considered the report a useful contribution to the improvement of the programme planning and budgetary process. The Committee acknowledged the inherent limits of any purely quantitative approach of programme performance and the margin of error implied in such an exercise. The Committee realized that a systematic exercise of measurement is the only opportunity for systematic control of the effectiveness of implementation of mandated activities to be carried out under a programme budget, and the only tool of control available for some programme managers. It draws much authority from its status as a tool of external control.

3. The Committee expressed concern at the overall low level of implementation, in particular, the sharp decline in the implementation of high priority designated activities from the level in the 1992-1993 biennium. Taking into

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account the information given in paragraphs 15, 16 and 20 of the report, as well as in the addendum to the report, the Committee recognized that the present methodology did not do justice to the departments affected by decisions taken during the biennium by the relevant intergovernmental bodies. Consequently, the Committee requested the Secretary-General to refine the reporting methodology for the next programme performance report, so as to better reflect both the extent to which the activities of the programme of work had actually been mandated throughout the period concerned and, correspondingly, the extent to which they had actually been implemented. The Committee recommended that appropriate measures be taken to ensure that programme managers adhere to the priorities mandated by the General Assembly. In this connection, the Committee stressed the need for continued efforts to improve the rate of implementation of the programme of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). While noting the detrimental effect of continuing high vacancies on the performance of ESCWA, the Committee nevertheless was of the view that this vacancy situation appeared to be chronic and deserved urgent attention. In this context, the Committee regretted that the vacancy rate in the case of ESCWA was much higher than that approved by the General Assembly and requested that immediate action be taken to face problems in that regard that directly affect programme performance.

4. The Committee expressed concern over the relatively large number of instances in which programme managers did not provide adequate reasons for the outputs that were terminated under their respective programmes. In that context, the Committee reiterated that all changes and additions introduced by programme managers in the course of implementation should be submitted to the appropriate intergovernmental bodies for consideration and approval, and stressed the need for the preparation of programme budget implication statements whenever additional activities are mandated by legislative bodies. These statements should indicate whether an activity of equivalent cost could be deleted or postponed in the same programme by the same intergovernmental body or else indicate the additional cost involved. The Committee stressed the need to ensure fully effective implementation of all mandated activities. Notwithstanding the discretion granted to the Secretary-General through rule 105.2 of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation, the Committee reiterated the central role of the General Assembly in changing or postponing activities and programmes.

5. The Committee noted that a substantial amount of regular budget resources are being used to fund operational activities. It also noted that an increasing proportion of extrabudgetary resources are being used to fund the implementation of activities of a non-operational nature. The Committee felt that a clearer organizational distinction between these two areas of work would provide more transparency in resource utilization and ensure that resources of the regular budget are utilized to address the mandates for which they were appropriated.

6. The Committee expressed concern at the findings of the report on publications and documentation (paras. 32-35). It noted that a number of departments are increasingly involved in the production and dissemination of information material and services. The Committee recommended that this trend be rationalized in order to ensure that information activities are undertaken in

close coordination with the Department of Public Information. This is necessary to ensure a unified policy in the area of public information and, in particular, to avoid duplication of publications and documentation. In this respect, the Committee recommended, without prejudice to existing rules and procedures in this matter, that no policy decision be taken until the report of the Secretary-General on the publications policy of the United Nations (A/C.5/48/10) is considered by the General Assembly, and until the relevant intergovernmental bodies consider it and take appropriate action on it.

7. With regard to paragraph 15 of the report, the Committee noted that more than 80 per cent of the outputs terminated occurred in the Department of Political Affairs, the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the five regional commissions combined.

8. The Committee endorsed the findings and conclusions in section IV of the report and the courses of action prescribed in paragraphs 36, 38, 41, 44 and 45. In that regard, the Committee noted that the report indicated in paragraph 37 that 181 outputs carried over from the 1992-1993 biennium were further postponed to the 1996-1997 biennium. The Committee agreed to recommend to the General Assembly that it consider that issue in the context of its consideration of the programme performance report at its fifty-first session.

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Thirty-sixth session
3-28 June 1996 (Part I)

DRAFT REPORT

Addendum

Rapporteur: Mr. Volodymyr Y. YELCHENKO (Ukraine)

PROGRAMME QUESTIONS

Proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001

1. The Committee considered the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 at its 15th to 34th meetings, from 12 to 25 June 1996, during the first part of its thirty-sixth session.

2. At the 15th meeting, on 12 June 1996, the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management, on behalf of the Secretary-General, introduced the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 (A/51/6). At the same meeting, the Controller made a statement.

3. The Committee considered and analysed all 25 programmes of the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 at its 16th to 34th meetings, from 12 to 25 June 1996. The Committee decided to revert to consideration of the draft report of the Committee on the 25 programmes of the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 at the second part of its thirty-sixth session.

General considerations

Discussion

4. Many delegations deeply regretted that the new format did not follow the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation

(ST/SGB/PPBME Rules/1 (1987)), approved by the General Assembly in its resolutions 37/234 and 38/227, nor did it strictly follow the guidelines recommended by the Committee.

5. Many delegations regretted that the Secretariat did not take fully into account previous decisions of the Committee on the inclusion in the subprogrammes of all mandated activities. Other delegations recalled the view that the listing of activities was recognized to be one of the shortcomings in the current medium-term plan.

6. Some delegations welcomed the congruence between programmatic and organizational structures to enhance accountability and responsibility; each programme would be carried out by one department or office and each subprogramme would be implemented by an organizational unit within the department or office, generally at the level of a division. One delegation noted that the programme for Africa would be implemented by three different offices. Other delegations expressed a preference for a sectoral approach and in that context observed that the format of the medium-term plan had yet to be approved.

7. Some delegations welcomed the efforts made to formulate objectives more clearly and precisely. Other delegations expressed reservations on the general nature of the objectives and the lack of quantifiable targets and expressed the view that efforts should continue to be made to improve further the formulation of the medium-term plan.

8. Many delegations expressed the view that legislative mandates should be indicated in the narrative of the programmes, while others preferred the legislative mandates to be listed in an annex to the respective programmes. Other delegations requested the Secretary-General to review legislative mandates in accordance with article III, rule 103.2 of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation, and in this connection, recalled that in accordance with its terms of reference (Economic and Social Council resolution 2008 (LX)), the Committee should assess the continuing validity of legislative decisions of more than five years' standing.

9. Many delegations deeply regretted the fact that the Secretariat had not provided certain information repeatedly requested by them during the debate. Those delegations requested that such information be provided to the Committee during the second part of its thirty-sixth session.

Conclusions

10. The Committee recalled General Assembly decision 50/452 of 22 December 1995, in which the Assembly authorized the Secretary-General to begin preparation of the medium-term plan on the basis of recommendations of the Committee and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and taking into account views expressed by Member States in the Fifth Committee.

11. The Committee reiterated the importance Member States attached to the medium-term plan, which constituted the principal policy directive of the United Nations and provided the framework for the biennial programme budgets, recalling

and reiterating the importance of General Assembly resolutions 37/234, 38/227, 41/213 and 48/218 A and decision 50/452 and the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation and bearing in mind paragraph 13 below. The Committee also recalled its terms of reference in Economic and Social Council resolution 2008 (LX).

12. The Committee stressed the importance of ensuring that the medium-term plan reflected all mandated programmes and activities and agreed that legislative mandates for the work to be carried out should be included in the approved version of the plan.

13. The Committee agreed that if the new format of the medium-term plan were adopted, it would be necessary, as recommended by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/49/958), to amend, as appropriate, the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation, which govern the preparation of the medium-term plan.

14. The Committee agreed with the view of the Secretary-General that efforts to ensure that the United Nations of the twenty-first century was equipped to rise to the challenges of that century depended on, above all, continuous, predictable and assured political and financial support from Member States.

Perspective

Discussion

15. Many delegations deeply regretted that the Secretary-General had not observed the structure of the perspective contained in document A/51/6 (Perspective) as recommended by the Committee, namely the presentation of five distinct sections dealing with persistent problems, emerging trends, challenges to be faced by the international community, the role of the Organization and the directions to be pursued. Some delegations expressed the view that the perspective was a well-written, thoughtful, balanced and succinct document, providing a clear over-arching statement on the work and role of the Organization.

16. Many delegations expressed the view that the perspective was not balanced in reflecting the interests of all Member States, nor did it accurately address the concerns of developing countries. The perspective did not give sufficient weight to the role of the Organization in economic and social development. They were also of the view that some of the terminology used was inappropriate since no consensus had yet been reached on many of the concepts described; furthermore, they pointed out that the perspective had omitted other important emerging trends, as well as a number of issues that were of major importance for the developing countries.

17. Many delegations noted that the perspective was forward-looking and policy-oriented, addressing persistent problems, emerging trends and many of the issues that were under consideration by the international community. They also

noted that the Secretary-General had taken into account the views expressed by the Committee at its previous sessions and by Member States in the Fifth Committee, as well as recommendations and views of Member States at other international forums.

18. Some delegations supported the idea that when discussing future trends, the perspective should include the objective of achieving greater democratization of the Organization's work and the composition of some of its bodies, particularly the Security Council. Other delegations felt that the composition of principal organs of the Organization were not within the purview of the Committee for Programme and Coordination.

19. Many delegations stressed the importance of reflecting the principles embodied in the Charter, the need to translate accurately all mandates given by the General Assembly and the need to respect national sovereignty. They emphasized that the role of the Organization could not be selective and must reflect the entire membership. Many delegations regretted that there appeared to be no relation between the perspective and the current medium-term plan.

20. Some delegations stressed the need to bear in mind that resources were finite and that the Organization could not and should not be expected to solve all the world's problems. Many delegations stressed the need to ensure that the Organization was provided with an adequate level of resources for the implementation of its legislative mandates and urged Member States to fulfil their financial obligations in full, on time and without conditions.

21. Many delegations requested that the perspective should be rewritten to incorporate all the concerns of developing countries and to take into account more fully the consensus reached in the Fiftieth Anniversary Declaration.

22. Some delegations did not consider it appropriate, nor practical, to request the Secretary-General to rewrite the perspective. They believed that the Secretary-General had the right to express his views which, they considered, took into account the challenges currently facing the international community. Some delegations were of the view that the Secretary-General's perspective was consistent with the expressions of Member States in the Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations (resolution 50/6). They also noted that the terminology used in the perspective could be found in the recommendations of major international conferences and had been used in the deliberations of the Economic and Social Council and the Second and Third Committees of the General Assembly, as well as in several working groups that were currently taking place on the agenda for development and the agenda for peace.

23. Many delegations emphasized that economic and social development must remain a priority of the Organization and regretted that the Secretary-General had not proposed priorities. Other delegations felt that the perspective had identified broad priority areas by means of the emphasis given by the Secretary-General to the need to promote peace and security, economic and social development and human rights, to respond effectively to humanitarian emergencies and to encourage respect for and the progressive development of international law. Furthermore, they pointed out that given the difficulty Member States had

in agreeing on priorities, the Secretary-General could not be expected to be more specific.

24. Many delegations jointly presented their views relating to the perspective. They rejected the perspective, expressed the view that it should be rewritten and in that context presented guidelines for the elaboration of the new perspective of the medium-term plan and requested that the document containing the guidelines be included in the report of the Committee.

25. Some delegations attached importance to the statement made by the Controller on 12 June 1996 in which he had set out a series of broad priorities. Other delegations felt that the Controller's statement had not been intended to set out broad priorities for the Committee's consideration.

Conclusion

26. The Committee was unable to reach agreement on the content of document A/51/6 (Perspective) and consequently was not able to consider the document, as submitted, as an integral part of the medium-term plan. It therefore requested that the Secretary-General be asked to present to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session, through the second part of the thirty-sixth session of the Committee for Programme and Coordination, a short and concise document to be considered for inclusion in the proposed medium-term plan outlining the broad areas of priority for the period of the medium-term plan, based on the relevant resolutions and decisions of the intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations, taking into account the views expressed by Member States as reflected in paragraphs 15 to 25 above.